

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Farmworker Education Program Services

Over 14,000 Hispanic farmworkers have received pesticide safety training through this program.

Spanish Language Training

Prelicense – typically consist of six-day course (2 hours each day) of intensive pesticide safety, use and law training to prepare participants for the Private Applicator exam (in Spanish or English). The exam is administered at the conclusion of the course. Currently working to incorporate practical, hands-on experience into the training program. WPS handler training verification cards are issued to those participants not passing the exam.

Worker Protection Standard (WPS) - short (1-2 hours) training provided to individuals defined under the WPS as either workers or handlers. Training meets or exceeds the employer training requirements of the WPS. Worker or handler WPS training verification cards issued at the conclusion of each course.

Recertification – continuing education training provided to Hispanic Private Applicators on diverse topics including pesticide safety, weed control and beneficial insects. Many of these recertification courses are done in cooperation with agricultural industry groups, providing information particularly relevant to the target audience. Recertification credits provided.

Hands-on Handler Training – During FY 99, worked cooperatively with the agricultural community in the Wenatchee area to develop and deliver a hands-on training program for pesticide mixer/loaders and applicators. Volunteer trainers from the community worked in teams using interactive training methods to provide training on mixing and loading, personal protective equipment, first aid and clean up and disposal. During FY 00, WSDA staff worked with the Columbia Basic Tree Fruit Society to provide a similar, hands-on training program in the Quincy area. WSDA is currently planning to partner with the Washington State Horticultural Association and Washington State University (WSU) to sponsor 8 similar hands-on training programs in early 2002. These will specifically target the tree fruit industry. A secondary focus of these programs will be to encourage other agricultural groups to sponsor their own community based training programs.

AmeriCorps Worker Protection Training - WSDA has partnered with the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP) and the WA State Migrant Council to sponsor AmeriCorps volunteers. The volunteers were based first in Yakima and then in Wenatchee and provided Worker Protection Standard required pesticide safety training to agricultural workers. AmeriCorps volunteers help growers with this responsibility by giving a free, one-hour interactive presentation, covering all the required safety points. WSDA hopes to partner with the Opportunities Industrialization Center, which now provides many of the services formally provided by the migrant council, in sponsoring future Americorps trainers.

Outreach Activities

Spanish Pesticide Notes - a Spanish supplement to the popular divisional newsletter. WSDA is currently working on the 3rd edition. It will be mailed to all licensees who have requested training information in Spanish, posted on the agency website and made available at training programs and other outreach opportunities.

Spanish Private Applicator Manual - translated WSU exam study guide into Spanish. Washington is one of the only states in the country to offer both a Spanish language Private Applicator exam and manual. Work is currently underway to translate other exams and manuals into Spanish.

Farmworker Advisory Committee - WSDA established and coordinates this committee consisting of growers, fieldmen, foremen, educators, chemical dealer representatives, social service agencies, health care outreach workers, and others. The committee is focusing on improving the availability of Spanish language pesticide safety training programs through developing partnerships with other entities involved with farmworker education. The program distributes a newsletter about committee activities and is currently working to expand the list of participants.

Farmworker Health & Safety Conference - WSDA's Farmworker Education Program worked with Eastern Washington University's Center for Farm Health and Safety to co-sponsor this conference in Yakima. The conference highlighted work being done to improve the health and safety of farmworkers. Although most of the agenda dealt directly or indirectly with pesticides, there was a very dynamic and informative session on farmworker housing.

Educational Resources List for Spanish-Speaking Farmworkers - Includes English as A Second Language classes, horticulture, and other educational opportunities that may be of interest to farmworkers in Grant, Chelan and Okanogan counties.

Pesticide Exposure Video - a 1993 video on pesticide exposure developed by WSDA's Compliance branch was translated into Spanish and narrated by WSDA employee Jorge Lobos. The video vividly demonstrates, through the use of fluorescent dyes, how pesticide exposures occur during pesticide applications. The combined English/Spanish video is available from WSU.

Radio Broadcasts – Prior to 2001, WSDA participated for several years in a monthly Spanish broadcast on public radio station KDNA. The show included relevant information on pesticide education topics and an opportunity for listeners to call-in questions. WSDA staff in the Wenatchee office developed two public service announcements (PSAs) targeted at area farmworkers. One dealt with avoiding take home pesticide exposure and the other with preventing and avoiding pesticide drift. The PSAs ran twice/day for 1½ months. Farmworker Education Program staff has made a number of other radio program guest appearances, speaking on topics relevant to farmworkers. The program will continue to seek out and accept opportunities in this area.

Translations - as needed to assist WSDA and other entities involved in farmworker education. All Farmworker Education Program staff members are bilingual (English and Spanish).

Other Activities

Assisting with Worker Protection Standard (WPS) Inspections and Assessments - Farmworker Education Program staff worked collaboratively with compliance inspectors in performing an assessment of the WPS. Along with observations of existing practices, WSDA staff interviewed growers and agricultural workers to obtain their feedback and opinions on the required elements of the standard. Grower feedback and suggestions for improving the regulation have been reported to EPA in an effort to target what aspects of the regulation help protect farmworkers from pesticide exposure and what aspects do not.